

Q1. What is pushing the government of Pakistan towards recognizing Israel? Why there is such an urgency? Is it a U turn?

Ans 1: Obviously it is the United States that has laid out what Pakistan must do. One long-held US foreign policy goal has been to persuade Pakistan to give Israel diplomatic recognition. The enhanced dependency of Musharraf government upon the goodwill of the US has led to fundamental shifts in its posture on many issues (except internal democracy in Pakistan). Recognition of Israel is now in the cards, and is definitely a huge departure from previously held positions. Nevertheless it is a shift in the right direction. We should have done it anyway, independent of US pressure.

Yes, Israel indisputably came into being at huge cost to the Palestinian people, just as North America and Australia were inhabited at great cost to their indigenous peoples. Nevertheless we do recognize and deal with both the US and Australia, as well as other nation states that emerged after great genocides and population transfers. Israel should not have been created because of the human suffering that followed. But it cannot be wished away. To hold back our recognition now is pointless, harmful to Pakistan, and the cause of international peace. This does not mean that Pakistan should refrain from condemning Israel's lust for land, its occupation of the West Bank, discrimination against Israeli Arabs etc. We should continue to protest even louder, but after recognizing Israel.

Q.2: How do you see the situation in the backdrop of India-Pakistan and Pakistan-China relations? Is there a connection between all these?

Ans 2: India has always maintained a friendly relationship with Israel. There is considerable trade, a large number of Israelis spend their vacations in India, and defense collaboration has increased steadily over the last decade. Israel has supplied state-of-the-art radar and early warning systems to India, as well as infrared devices to check infiltration across the LOC, etc. In contrast, Israel and Pakistan have a deeply hostile relationship. This is highly unreasonable because these two countries have never had anything to do with each other (because of geographical separation), and they have no issues such as territorial claims on each other's territories or any competition for resources. There is no logical basis for enmity between two disconnected entities.

Q.3: How would you compare and contrast the Arab countries with Pakistan as far as relations with Israel are concerned?

Ans 3: The Arabs have always been more pragmatic than Pakistan in this regard. We can theorize as much as we like about which countries ought to exist and which not, but reality always has the last word. The Arabs have to live with Israel, now that it has successfully forced itself into existence and will not go away. Therefore, one after the other, Arab countries have recognized Israel.

Q. 4: Why do you think the common people in Pakistan have not strongly reacted to the government over the issue as expected?

Ans 4: It will not be a popular decision to recognize Israel. Religious animosities against it have been promoted for decades. It is fortunate that there will be little public reaction, but unfortunately it will be for a bad reason. The fact is that the people in Pakistan have tuned out from everything. Public apathy is total because the military has destroyed the will of the people, and succeeded in convincing them of their utter powerlessness to affect anything of significance. We are in the hands of our military masters who think of themselves as God's greatest gift to Pakistan, and who alone can guide the nation. This hideous truth points to the failure of Pakistan as a viable state. Even as millions protested globally, Pakistanis remained helplessly immobile when the US launched its war of aggression against Iraq on manifestly faked evidence. If they remain silent now, it is just as well.

Q. 5.: Will Pakistan ensure its security by recognising Israel as some people are suggesting? How will it benefit Pakistan on the diplomatic front?

Ans 5: Israel is a distant, secondary issue for Pakistan. Recognizing Israel will not change anything fundamentally for Pakistan, but the world will definitely see us as a more reasonable state. We will thereby show that our foreign policy is not that of a primitive theocratic state, but one that is nuanced and capable of dealing with larger issues in the world.

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